

Message Text

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TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJ: JOE CLARK AS TORY LEADER: REACTIONS AND PROSPECTS

RE: A) OTTAWA 723; B) OTTAWA 722; C) OTTAWA 694

SUMMARY:

1. FIRST REACTIONS TO JOE CLARK'S VICTORY SUNDAY NIGHT APPEAR ENTHUSIASTIC IN MEDIA AND PROPER, THOUGH RESTRAINED, IN TORY CAUCUS. LEBERALS PRIVATELY ACKNOWLEDGE CLARK WILL BE TOUGH OPPONENT.

END SUMMARY

2. TV AND NEWSPAPER COMMENTATORS, AS WELL AS EDITORIAL WRITERS, EMPHASIZE THAT CLARK GIVES PC'S NEW, YOUTHFUL IMAGE TOGETHER WITH CONTINUATION OF BEST THAT STANFIELD STOOD FOR. GLOBE AND MAIL CALLED CLARK "A MAN FOR RECONCILIATION" AND ADDED: " JOE CLARK STOOD FOR WHAT THIS CONVENTION WAS ALL ABOUT: OPENNESS AND DIALOGUE AND PARTICIPATION." TORONTO STAR EMPHASIZED THAT CHOICE OF CLARK, RATHER THAN RIGHT-WING CANDIDATE, HELPS KEEP THE TORIES "RELEVANT" AND OFFERS "FRESH NEW ALTERNATIVE TO CANADIAN VOTERS AT THE NEXT ELECTION." OTTAWA CITIZEN WROTE THAT

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CONVENTION PICKED "A LEADER WITH PERHAPS A BROADER GRASP

OF CANADA'S PROBLEMS THAN ANY OTHER CANDIDATE IT MIGHT HAVE CHOSEN," AND MONTREAL GAZETTE CALLED CLARK "A VIGOROUS, BROAD-MINDED AND ENGAGING PERSONALITY" WHO "COULD WELL BE THE KIND OF MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD POLITICAL LEADER WHO CAN CAPITALIZE ON DISSATISFACTION WITH THE TRUDEAU MINISTRY AND BRING ABOUT AN OVERDUE CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN CANADA."

3. ONLY SOUR NOTES COME FROM FRENCH MEDIA, WITH MONTREAL'S LE DEVOIR REFERRING TO COALITION OF "ANGLOPHONE PROVINCES AGAINST A FRANCOPHONE MEMBER FROM QUEBEC," ALTHOUGH THE PAPER IS NO FRIEND OF WAGNER AND ENDORSED MULRONEY PRIOR TO CONVENTION. IN ADDITION, SEVERAL MEMBERS OF QUEBEC DELEGATION HAVE PUBLICLY EXPRESSED BITTERNESS AT WAGNER DEFEAT, WITH FRANCOPHONE TORY MP ROCH LASALLE ANNOUNCING MONDAY NIGHT THAT HE WOULD NOT SEEK RE-ELECTION TO COMMONS UNDER TORY BANNER.

4. JUST AS CLARK HAS JOB OF RECONCILING DISAPPOINTED QUEBECKERS BACK INTO PARTY FOLD, HE ALSO FACES POSSIBLE RESENTMENT OF TORY RIGHT WING, PARTICULARLY IN CAUCUS. MOST TORY MP'S FAVORED WAGNER OR HELL YER PRIOR TO CONVENTION AND HAVE BEEN CONSPICUOUSLY RETICENT SINCE CLARK VICTORY. ALTHOUGH CLARK PROMISES CONCILIATORY ATTITUDE TO ALL, FIRST TEST CASE MAY BE FELLOW ALBERTAN JACK HORNER WHO ENDORSED WAGNER AT CONVENTION AND HAS EVADED ANSWERING QUESTION WHETHER HE WILL SUPPORT NEW LEADER. MANY PUNDITS, AS WELL AS STANFIELD HIMSELF, HAVE ADVISED CLARK NOT TO TOLERATE THE BACK-BITING WHICH HAS FOR YEARS PLAGUED PARTY, AND CLARK NO DOUBT REALIZES THAT TIME TO DEAL WITH THIS PROBLEM IS NOW AT OUTSET OF LEADERSHIP.

5. IN SHORT, CLARK MAY IRONICALLY BE MORE APPEALING TO COUNTRY AS A WHOLE THAVPOMPF8:MKIOPTIME, AND HIS IMMEDIATE TASKS ARE IN ORGANIZING AND GAINING FULL SUPPORT OF PARTY. IN LONG RUN, HIS POLITICAL ASSETS WOULD APPEAR TO BE PROMISING, JUDGING FROM THE INITIAL MEDIA REACTION. STANDING SOMEWHAT TO THE RIGHT OF PM, HE CAN COMPETE WITH LIBERALS FOR MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD VOTE AND COUNT ON LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GENERAL SUPPORT OF RIGHT FLANK (WHICH HAS NO PLACE ELSE TO GO) WHILE LIBERALS MUST SHARE LEFT VOTE WITH NDP. HIS POLICY POSITIONS ON MAJOR ISSUES INCLUDE OPPOSITION TO CAPITAL PUNISHMENT, CURTAINMENT OF RIGHT TO STRIKE BY CIVIL SERVANTS IN ESSENTIAL SERVICES, BILINGUALISM WITH MODERATION, REFORM OF ABORTION LAWS BUT NO ABORTION ON DEMAND (BOTH HE AND WIFE ARE CATHOLIC), WAGE AND PRICE CONTROLS BUT ONLY ON TEMPORARY BASIS, CURTAILMENT OF

GOVERNMENT SPENDING WITH WELFARE GEARED MORE STRINGENTLY TO NEED, AND DECENTRALIZATION OF INDUSTRY TO WESTERN AND EASTERN CANADA. THOUGH RED IN TORY CONTEXT, CLARK MAY WELL BE IN DEAD CENTER OF THE NATIONAL POLITICAL SPECTRUM, AT LEAST FOR THE PRESENT TIME.

6. PERHAPS MOST SIGNIFICANT ARE PRIVATE REACTIONS OF LIBERAL PARTY MEMBERS. MICHAEL KIRBY, PM'S ADVISER ON DOMESTIC POLITICS, TOLD POLCOUNS CLARK JUST ABOUT LAST PC LEADERSHIP CANDIDATE LIBERALS WOULD HAVE CHOSEN IF THEY HAD THEIR DRUTHERS. KIRBY SAID LIBERALS WOULD MUCH HAVE PREFERRED TORIES TO HAVE LEFT THEM THE CENTER AND CENTER-LEFT BY CHOOSING RIGHT WING LEADER AND WOULD HAVE BEEN ESPECIALLY PLEASED IF CONSERVATIVES HAD CHOSEN WAGNER, WHOM TRUDEAU WOULD HAVE "EATEN ALIVE" IN QUEBEC. LIBERALS WILL SEEK TO CAPTIALIZE ON WHAT KIRBY TERMED "ILLUSION" OF ANTI-FRENCH PC ATTITUDE IN REJECTION OF WAGNER, AND ON REPORTED QUICK TEMPER OF CLARK, WHICH MIGHT MAKE HIM SUSCEPTIBLE OF BEING GOADED INTO UNTENABLE POSITIONS. IN CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR, ENVIRONMENT MINISTER MARCHAND DIFFERED FROM KIRBY'S ESTIMATE OF WAGNER BY INDICATING THAT HE WOULD HAVE GIVEN PC CHANCE TO MAKE INROADS ON LIBERAL PREPONDERANCE IN QUEBEC, BUT MARCHAND ALSO ACKNOWLEDGED THAT CLARK WAS FORMIDABLE OPPONENT. GOVERNMENT LEADER IN SENATE RAY PERRAULT EXPRESSED VIEW THAT CLARK WOULD CLEARLY HELP PC IN WEST, WHERE, HOWEVER, PC STRENGTH COULD NOT GREATLY INCREASE, THAT CLARK WOULD HAVE TROUBLE MAKING INROADS IN QUEBEC AND AMONG INDUSTRIAL CIRCLES IN ONTARIO. HOWEVER, WITH HIS YOUTH, ENERGY, AND ALREADY-DEMONSTRATED ABILITY IN HOUSE, AND WITH WTO YEARS TO GET PC HOUSE IN ORDER, CLARK COULD INDEED BE "DANGEROUS" FOR THE LIBERALS. ENDERS

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